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ABSTRACT

Education of the "scholar-teacher" shaped the vision of the Teacher Education Program (TEP) at Macquarie University in New South Wales (NSW), Australia, as teacher education was made the shared responsibility of the School of Education and all of the University's other schools in 1967. Change over the past 25 years is evident in 3 major teacher education partnerships which have characterized the program: (1) partnership between academics in education and other disciplines and the curriculum lecturers in the TEP; (2) partnership between the university and the educational community, notably the NSW Department of Education (the employing authority); and (3) partnership among student, master teacher, and curriculum lecturer, which provided student teachers continuous contact with experienced teachers and which involved the curriculum lecturer as a link between the TEP and the schools. Changes in funding, decline in demand for teachers, political tensions within the university, and other factors caused the first two partnerships to become "derailed," while the third partnership has remained intact for 25 years. Historical research underscores the reality of the role of teacher educators as experimenters and recognizes that rarely is the "new" new in teacher education. Through ownership of the past and attention to its lessons, educators will become empowered to shape their future role. (Contains 22 references.) (JDD)

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TEACHER EDUCATORS AS EXPERIMENTERS:

Is the "new" really new?

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ABSTRACT

Through examination of one model of teacher education and its development over the past twenty-five years, this paper will trace the ways in which POLITICS, POLICY and PRACTICE have together informed change. The establishment of the Teacher Education Program at Macquarie University, Sydney, was an experiment for the new University. Strategies which were considered innovative and ambitious in the late 60's were tried and adapted in an attempt to educate "scholar-teachers". This paper will examine the various strategies and the influences which dictated their success or failure. A University-wide approach to concurrent teacher education linked continuous School Experience with a system of temporary lecturers and "master teachers" through parallel sets of three-way partnerships. State, Federal and institutional politics and policy have played a considerable role in shaping the development of the program and its potential to empower both tertiary and school-based teacher educators.

The following paper is designed to complement a 15 minute presentation on this theme.

TEACHER EDUCATORS AS EXPERIMENTERS:

Is the "new" really new?

"Reform" of teacher education topped the agenda in the U.S. and U.K. in the 80's and continues into the 90's with Australian TEPs also moving to embrace the "new". Historians of teacher education and academics with long memories will recognise the cyclic nature of change as they identify strategies and approaches which formed the basis for earlier experiments in teacher education. A century of attempts to blend theory and practice by seeking closer links between schools and tertiary institutions has resulted in numerous trials of "new" ideas. Reflection upon some of these successes and failures provides a sound basis for future planning, implementation and evaluation. A bold experiment in Australian teacher education was the founding of the Teacher Education Program at Macquarie University. 1994, the 25th year of the program, seems an appropriate time to pause and to examine a model which, on the whole, has endured over an unsettled period in the history of Australian teacher education. Such examination will reveal the range of influences which shape the work of teacher education and which determine which "new" ideas will be allowed to grow and develop in the on-going quest to provide quality education for the nation's teachers.

'AND GLADLY TECHE' states the motto adopted by Macquarie University in 1964. From the earliest days teaching was viewed as a major role of the new institution. In preliminary discussions on the establishment of a teacher education program the Vice-Chancellor, Prof.

A. Mitchell, wrote to Dr. H.S.Wyndham, the Director-General of Education in N.S.W., "This is the first venture of the University into a professional field and it is appropriate that it should be into teaching, not only because of the deep concern with it which has activated the Council and the academic staff since the University's inception. I know that you share this concern and also our hopes that this new programme will meet with real success." Few universities in Australia had so willingly and so publicly embraced teacher education. Although the charter of Macquarie University called for teacher education, few had anticipated the radical proposal presented to Academic Senate in 1967 (Philp, 1967). Teacher education would be the shared responsibility of the young institution. Administration would be provided through the School(Faculty) of Education but all Schools would be involved in planning, teaching and evaluating the education of future teachers.

Education of the 'scholar-teacher' shaped the vision of the MU TEP. Early documentation called for "scholar teachers rather than educational technicians", (Mitchell, 1969), a teacher both interactive and innovator, (Dunkley, 1972) and a change-agent (Dunkley, 1972). Such a teacher would be prepared through a "revolutionary" (Philp, 1967) and "experimental" (Dunkley, 1970) program substantially different from the traditional patterns of teacher education in Australia. The opportunity to devise a model 'tabula rasa' allowed an amalgam of best practice as perceived by academics of the day. The new program, inspired in part by writings of Conant (1963) and practice at Harvard in the 60's, introduced a range of teacher education strategies innovative in Australia at the time but commonplace in the 90's.(Fig.1) Although hailed as "new", the ideas presented had been conceived and trialled elsewhere. (Combleth and Ellsworth, 1994) The "new" aspect of the work was the determination to break from the existing patterns, the combining of the various components and the confidence and courage to commence the experiment.

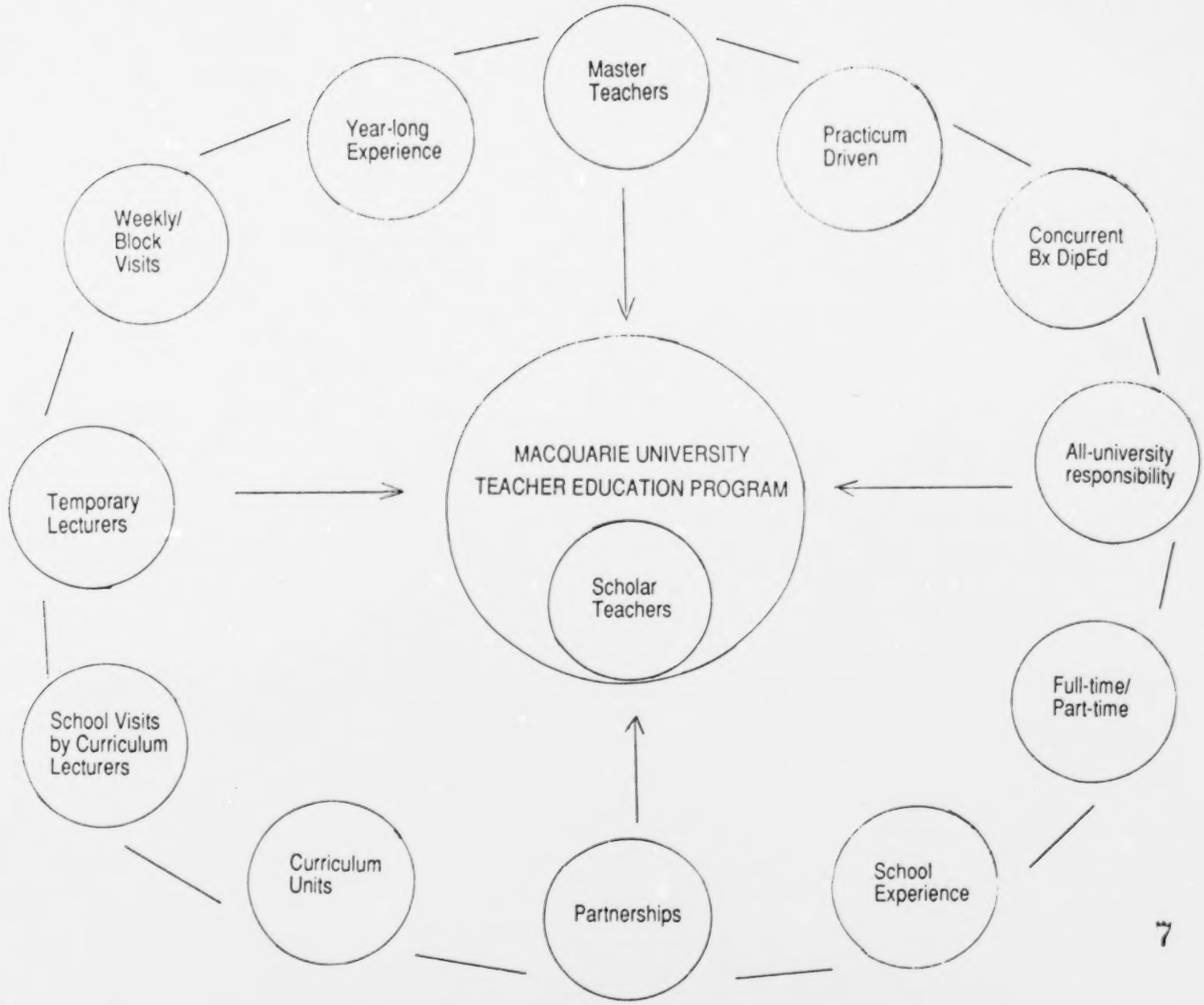

Fig. 1 The Teacher Education Program at Macquarie University, 1969.

Each component noted has been modified and shaped over the years. Each contributes to the model as it functions to-day. Even those aspects which are no longer of significance have left a legacy which informs the current work. Influences upon teacher education are many, varied and, frequently, contentious. Policies at Federal, State and institutional level reflect, at times, a perceived political agenda but, at others, appear to contradict it. It would be foolhardy to ascribe changes to specific influences after the passage of years. Establishing "truth" is in itself a challenge. Attempts to reconstruct even such a recent history are inevitably dependent upon differing interpretations of events and approaches as well as upon recollections which are already starting to fade. Current research into the program has invited 80 former participants in the TEP process to respond to an abridged TEP History created from official records. (Smedley, 1994) The following amalgum of their voices and views provides an analysis of change through focus upon three major teacher education partnerships which characterised the program envisaged by the founding academics. (Fig. 2)

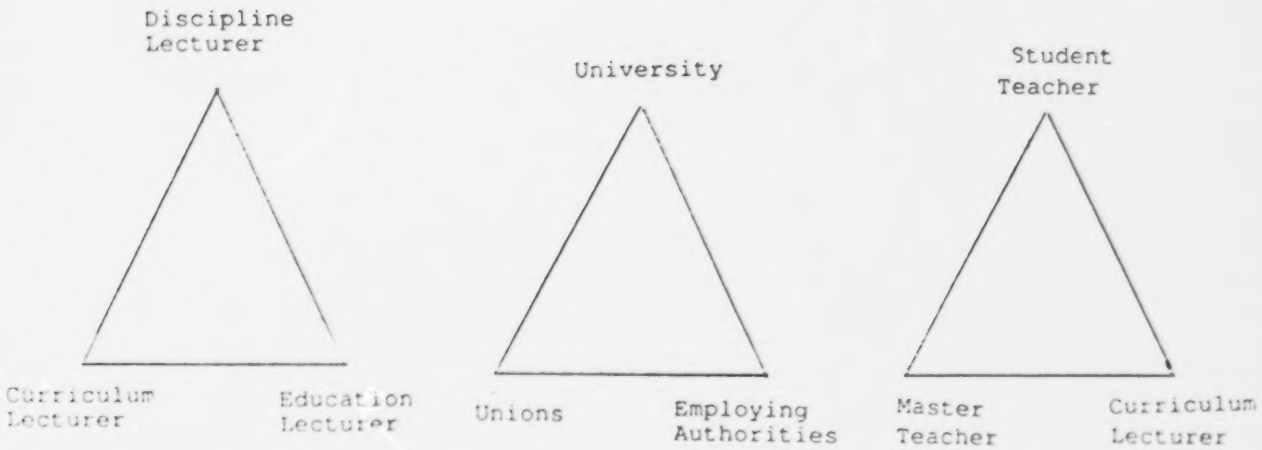

Fig. 2: Teacher Education Partnerships at Macquarie.

Each of these partnerships involved the interweaving of two or more of the above strategies. All of these partnerships have been exposed to the internal and external pressures which have influenced the many facets of the work of teacher educators at Macquarie.

Ownership of teacher education by the university is the clearest change to emerge. MU TEP was described by one research participant as "an idea ahead of its time." Nowhere is this more evident than in the wish of the program founders to have teacher education accepted as a legitimate participant in university life. The first Vice-Chancellor, recalling his own teacher education as a "flat, disillusionary experience" (Mitchell, 1993) planned a "lively, demanding experience" for Macquarie University. He claimed, "It should be a distinction to be allowed to train and to supervise aspiring teachers." He expected that his staff would share his vision: the first of the three partnerships intended was that between academics in Education and other disciplines and the curriculum lecturers in the TEP. In the 60's the concept of teacher education as an integral part of academe was indeed astounding. The idea of a team of teacher educators working together to enhance development of pre-service teachers was certainly new to the Australian scene. The potential for enrichment for all participants was immense. Success of this component of the model would have truly served as an inspiration for future generations of academics. The oft-quoted reluctance of academics to involve themselves in teacher education and to accord teacher education a place in academic life would vanish as a new respect for the profession emerged (Ducharme, 1985). Original support for these ideals led to the establishment, in 1970, of the Senate Standing Committee on the Teacher Education Program. Monthly meetings, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and attended by all Heads of Schools, provided a higher status to the university-wide venture. The gradual decline in importance and power of this committee not only mirrors the fortunes of teacher education over the past 25 years but also underscores a range of influences which led to the disbanding of the committee twenty-two years later.

Firstly, it reflects changes in national and institutional priorities. The 80's brought a decline in the demand for teachers as well as a vigorous interest in more economically viable, less complex and more prestigious areas. Secondly, it mirrors a political tension within the institution. The early

intention that academics should involve themselves in the teacher education process did not sit well with a number of staff members accustomed to the traditional view of teacher training as the vocational preserve of teachers' colleges (Schwebel, 1985). Apprehensions were exacerbated by the rapid expansion in the 70's of the program as a result of government policy on scholarships. The widely-held community perception of Macquarie University as a "great big teachers' college" (Mitchell 1993) appealed little to many academics at the new university, even to many of those working as Education specialists. Thirdly and most importantly, a vital link between the Schools of the university and the TEP staff had been steadily eroded. Over the years, the presence of the TEP curriculum lecturers in each School had served to sustain interest in and contact with the TEP. During their three year temporary secondment from the classroom the lecturers became an integral part of the Schools, maintaining offices there and invariably proving themselves valuable members of the staff. From the early 80's, cutbacks in funding, dictated by the decline in teacher demand, resulted in the contraction of these invaluable seconded lectureships. The gradual withdrawal of their services and the subsequent decline in liaison with academic staff proved a matter of concern to both the TEP and the Schools. The vision of an all-university TEP was no longer a reality. Links with the various Schools were now dependent upon the individual practice of TEP and discipline staff.

As the partnerships with the Schools declined, so the working relationship with the School of Education strengthened. In a pattern now familiar throughout the nation, a sharp decline in Education staff numbers and 'corporate memory' has been experienced. The past few years have seen educationally-sound but economically-inspired interweaving of research and teaching within the School. School Visits, for example, once the exclusive province of curriculum lecturers, are now undertaken by them and by those Education staff with previous teaching experience in the area. Lecturers are working more frequently in both programs, increasing understanding of one another's work and enhancing the blending of theory and practice. In a case of 'strength through adversity' a positive 'esprit de corps' is emerging to unite staff in their endeavour to maintain quality research and teaching in Education. The original three-way partnership is

now developing in a positive way as a two-way partnership between EDUC and TEP staff.

Another early and significant partnership in the development of the model was that with the educational community, notably the N.S.W. Department of Education. From the outset, interest and support were clear. After the initial meetings, the Vice-Chancellor wrote to Dr. Wyndham of the "spirit of partnership which characterised the discussions." He continued, "I am well satisfied that effective preparation of teachers within universities can only be possible if there is a close relationship between university and the Department, including, as a major element, the practising teachers in the schools."(1967). Relationships with employing authorities and unions certainly commenced in an appropriate fashion with the rationale for the experiment welcomed by all. Funding of the program, however, proved a source of disagreement as, within a few short years, clashes over payment of salaries for both Master Teachers and seconded lecturers soured relationships between all parties. The eventual extension of payment to co-operating teachers in all institutions resolved the former concern for a time. (It is ironic that the question of the right of tertiary institutions to select and employ teachers to work with pre-service students remains unresolved thirty years on.) The payment of seconded teachers also became the province of the university from the early 70's. The political concerns of all organisations over control of teacher education overrode earlier desires to work closely together in this important endeavour. The initial enthusiasm for the educational experiment was insufficient to counter the political tensions which resulted from it.

Despite constant calls for increased co-operation amongst stakeholders from teacher educators and expert committees (Ramsey, 1990; Auchmuty, 1980), vital components of the Macquarie experiment, two important and appropriate models of co-operation, were "derailed" through a combination of external and internal pressures. One set of partnerships, however, has remained intact for 25 years. It is the most important. Its enduring quality is evidence of the esteem in which this partnership is held by all participants. It is the very partnership whose survival is dependent upon those most closely involved with the experiment - students, classroom teachers and curriculum lecturers. Their continuing goodwill,

enthusiasm and dedication have ensured the growth of this vital aspect of the work of the Macquarie TEP. Of all the elements in the Macquarie model, it is this working relationship with the Master Teachers which remains closest to its original conception. Recent research (Smedley, 1993) indicates strong support from both MTs and TEP staff for this feature. In 1982 Eltis described the Master Teacher as the "lynch-pin" of the Macquarie model. His words were echoed by a 1994 temporary lecturer who labelled the Master Teacher "the key to the program."

The student/MT/lecturer partnership is the focus of the major thrust of the model, the new approach to the practicum. "Practice teaching", with its narrow short-term focus on the classroom, was to be replaced by a wider "School Experience" with "continuous contact with a school and a senior, experienced teacher...along the lines used in good schemes of medical education." These experienced teachers, Master Teachers, became contracted, salaried staff of the university with broad responsibilities for the preparation and assessment of pre-service teachers. Students and MTs worked in a triadic teacher education partnership with teachers seconded to the university for a three-year period. The latter undertook School Visits as well as the teaching of TEP curriculum units and of the specific academic subject in the School of their discipline. Their role was to provide the link between the discipline, Education, TEP and the schools. In 1970, Dunkley, Director of the TEP, noted, "A threefold partnership, involving the scholar in his particular discipline, the educationalist endowed with knowledge of educational theory, and the teacher skilled in the practical applications in the classroom, fostering the development of the scholar teacher, has become the Macquarie tradition." For the first time, regular, on-going, deliberate and dynamic links between practical experiences in schools and tertiary workshops could be forged. School and university sessions could be illustrated, expanded and challenged by students and their teacher educators, both tertiary- and school-based as theory and practice were tested and linked week by week (Koop, 1991).

At Macquarie the teachers in schools and the lecturers on campus have worked closely together in a relationship of mutual trust and respect. Several components of the model were instrumental in fostering this relationship - the weekly visits, schools visits by curriculum lecturers and

regular on-campus meetings (Gaffey & Porter, 1990). These meetings were a true innovation. Teachers, students and lecturers came together to share understandings of their various roles in teacher education, to strengthen personal links and to provide professional development for one another. In this way pre-service and in-service teacher education developed together for participants (Bush, 1977; Chadwick, 1990). Within a structure devised 25 years ago an opportunity for sharing and ownership has been fostered. Curriculum lecturers and students come together annually with their Master Teachers in a teacher education cycle which allows the three parties to contribute to and to draw from the relationship according to their specific needs. The Master Teachers, empowered through their knowledge and understanding of the process, function as genuine school-based teacher educators.

The above overview, of necessity, tells only part of the story. Policy and politics exert both positive and negative forces upon practice. The initial support for the innovative model, the recurrent calls for concurrent programs, continuous practicum and greater collaboration with schools and supervising teachers by a range of reports have served to sustain the work of the MU TEP staff (Gargano, 1993; Sandholtz & Merseth, 1992; DEET, 1989).

By examining the strengths and weaknesses of our own and other model of teacher education, as well as the pressures upon them, we can gradually prepare ourselves for informed planning for the future(Smyth, 1986). Teacher educators need to look both forwards and backwards (Katz & Raths, 1992). We need to understand the rationale which informs our practice. Boomer reminds us that "because we have not exposed the theory behind our present practices, we tend to remain spellbound by habit." (Boomer, p.8, 1985). Historical research underscores the reality of the role of teacher educators as experimenters and quickly alerts newcomers to the field to the fact that rarely is the "new" new in teacher education. It is only through ownership of the past and attention to the many lessons it has to teach us that we will become empowered to shape our future role.

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